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UNIONIZING STEEL

BY
WM. Z. FOSTER

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1936

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Published by Workers Library Publishers, Inc.,
P. O. Box 148, Sta. D, New York City, August, 1936



PREFACE

A new union drive is now on in Steel. Again, the union knocks at the doors of those 500,000 workers who have been exploited for so long by the giant Steel Trust.

To the men before the blast furnaces and in the rolling mills, this campaign means much. In it is bound up the possibility of better homes for these men, security in their jobs, improved conditions for their children.

Without the union, the men stand paralyzed and powerless, unable to remedy the serious evils in Steel. Without the union, they are subjected to the brutal spy system of the Steel Trust. They are at the mercy of the speed-up, in the terrific heat. They are unable to raise their voices in the legislative halls or elsewhere—for their own protection against pneumonia, the curse of the steel workers, or against the high rate of accidents in their ranks.

The company unions—of which the companies have talked so much—have failed miserably in their promises to the workers. They have not protected those workers: they have not won improved hours or wages for the men. They have been more interested in picnics and “entertainments” than in the protection of the workers’ homes, the workers’ health and their children.

It is the real union—the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers—which will win for the men these things which the company union has failed to gain.

Seventeen years ago, there was another great campaign in steel. The lessons of that drive are of the utmost importance at the present time—to the organizers of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee and to the workers in the steel plants.

No one can speak more clearly on what occurred in 1919

—and on the meaning of those happenings to the union drive of 1936—than William Z. Foster, leader of the 1919 campaign.

It was he who aroused the labor movement to the necessity of organizing the men in this giant basic industry. It was he who carried on that splendid drive which brought hundreds of thousands of workers into the union ranks. Sabotaged at every turn by the reactionary leaders of the American Federation of Labor, Foster's committee raised the banner of the union in Steel as it was never raised before.

It is good news that he brings in this analysis of the possibilities of the 1936 campaign of the Committee for Industrial Organization and its Steel Workers Organizing Committee.

In the first place, a better situation exists in the industry than in 1919. The reports of the companies show that production is rising. Profits are going up. Wages can be made to go up also.

The political situation in 1936 is also much better for the workers. There was no such chance to win civil liberties in the steel towns as there is now.

Today—as Foster particularly emphasizes—there is one union for the steel workers instead of the 24 that divided the workers in 1919. The language difficulties are also much less. Today the labor movement is back of the drive as it never was seventeen years ago.

The message of Foster's fine analysis—in the pages that follow—to the steel workers of the nation is: "You can defeat the Steel Trust today! You can build a strong union!"

Each page of this pamphlet is of value to those who wish to achieve that end.

LOUIS F. BUDENZ

UNIONIZING STEEL

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

*National Chairman of the Communist Party and
Leader of the 1919 Steel Strike*

ONCE MORE the steel workers are on the march. With unbreakable courage, they are organizing anew for defense of themselves and their families. For many years the Steel Trust has ruled the steel industry with an iron hand. It has ruthlessly exploited the masses of workers for the benefit of absentee, parasite owners, most of whom never saw a steel mill. For the employers the steel industry has meant billions in unearned profits; for the workers and their families it has always meant killing toil, bitter poverty and cruel suppression.

Only by trade unionism, through one great industrial union of all steel workers—the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers—can a bridle be put on the power of the Steel Trust and the workers secure a decisive voice in the establishment of their working and living conditions; only when the steel workers, jointly with all the other oppressed toiling masses, organize politically, overthrow capitalism and set up socialism, will they finally be free from exploitation and tyranny.

The present great steel organization campaign is being carried on by the Committee for Industrial Organization, headed by John L. Lewis and comprising a dozen strong A. F. of L. trade unions, with 1,250,000 members. It is the

most formidable campaign yet undertaken to organize the steel workers and it has every prospect for success.

As Secretary of the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers, which conducted the great steel campaign and strike of 365,000 steel workers of 1919, I have here set down (reprinted from articles in the *Daily Worker*, Communist Party organ) some of the major reasons why the present steel campaign must succeed, and also a number of the basically important lessons that should be learned from that historic 1919 struggle. The steel workers can and will be organized, and all the power of the Steel Trust cannot prevent it.

Article I

Why the C.I.O. Campaign Will Succeed

WITH THE signing of the recent agreement between the Committee for Industrial Organization and the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, for the organization of the steel industry upon an industrial basis, the door has been flung wide open for a successful organization campaign. Already the work of organization is getting under way in various steel towns and a large body of organizers are active. This campaign, while centering in the steel industry, should also result in the organization of many thousands of workers in the innumerable metal plants which cluster about the steel industry. If the drive is carried through aggressively, huge armies of the unorganized should be drawn into the trade unions also in many other industries, and a new progressive turn given to the entire American labor movement. Every worker in the United States stands to benefit by the trade union conquest of the greatest fortress of the open shop, the steel industry.

At the present time, many vital factors converge to create the most favorable conditions for the organization of the steel workers that have ever existed. It is not too much to say that the C.I.O. has in its hands the elements of a sure victory provided it presses forward energetically with the work. Nor can all the terrorism, fake eight-hour days, company unions, etc., of the Steel Trust prevent such a victory.

This situation not only gives the C.I.O. a great opportunity but also places upon it a tremendous responsibility.

In order to show just how favorable, relatively, the situation now is for the organization of the steel workers, it will be well to make a running comparison with some of the major conditions that the organization campaign of 1919 had to contend with. When this is done, it becomes at once clear that the task now confronting the C.I.O. is less difficult than that facing the organizers in 1919. If, therefore, the great mass of the workers were organized in the 1919 campaign, and a strike of 365,000 workers carried on, then the inescapable conclusion follows that the C.I.O., with far more favorable factors on its side, should be able to organize the steel industry. Let us therefore take up one after the other some of the serious difficulties confronting the campaign of 1919 and compare them with the present state of affairs.

More Favorable Economic and Political Situation

The organizing campaign and strike of 1919 suffered the handicap of being conducted during the period of reaction that followed the World War. The steel industry, with its war munitions orders suddenly cut off, had dropped rapidly in production and the workers were in a defensive mood and not inclined to aggressive organizational steps. Moreover, a period of intense political reaction possessed the country, this being the time of the notorious Palmer Red raids and the beginnings of the greatest union-smashing drive in American labor history. The steel corporations, therefore, were facilitated in using the most ruthless methods of economic terrorism, discharging some 33,000 workers for joining the unions, carrying on a wholesale suppression of free speech

and free assembly in the steel districts, the arresting, slugging and shooting of organizers, etc.

At the present time, however, the economic and political situation is distinctly more favorable for the organization of the steel workers. Production in the industry is on the upgrade. The steel workers, reflecting the greater radicalism of the masses, are distinctly in a mood for organization. This is seen, for instance, in the present active movement of revolt in the company unions. Also, the right to organize is much more firmly established in industry generally, and the steel trust will have difficulty in making the wholesale discharges that were the order of the day in the 1919 campaign. The fact that this is an election year also makes it a more favorable time for organization, by making it more difficult for the steel trust to suppress free speech, to refuse the workers meeting halls, and to otherwise carry on the ruthless and unbridled terrorism that it did in 1919.

If the C.I.O. proceeds energetically with its work it can organize the bulk of the steel workers in the next three months or so, and thus bring the whole situation to a head in the midst of the election campaign. This, with the capitalist politicians scrambling for the workers' votes, would put the steel workers in a highly strategic position. Altogether, the economic and political situation is far more favorable for the C.I.O. than it was for the 1919 organizers.

Industrial Unionism

Another great weakness of the 1919 campaign was that it had to be carried out on the basis of a loose federation of twenty-four craft unions. The general result was a failure to present a united front against the steel bosses and to develop the maximum power of the workers, the movement being divided against itself in two dozen directions. This

federation form of organization, however, was the best that the organizers of the campaign could set up under the existing circumstances, as at that time there was practically no sentiment in the A. F. of L. for industrial unionism. It was a case of either a campaign on the basis of a loose federation of many craft unions, or no campaign at all.

At the present time, however, the situation is profoundly changed and improved. Profiting from the lessons of the futility of craft divisions in the 1919 and many other strikes, the sentiment for industrial unionism in the basic industries has grown widely in the A. F. of L. So much so that the C.I.O. is able to proceed upon the basis of organizing all the workers into one industrial union—the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers. This fact gives the C.I.O. campaign an enormous advantage over that of 1919.

Solid Trade Union Support

A further disastrous weakness of the 1919 campaign lay in the fact that it had no real backing from organized labor. The A. F. of L. itself neglected and even sabotaged the campaign from start to finish. In fact, the Gompers machine, fearing that the success of the campaign would greatly strengthen the radical and progressive elements in the federation, showed its direct hostility to the movement upon a number of occasions. This attitude was also reflected by the 24 “cooperating” unions. Except for three or four of the lesser of these organizations, none of them gave any support worthy of the name to the campaign.

The real force behind the drive was the organizing crew of some 150 organizers, plus a whole network of local committees and organizations that were gradually built out of the membership and funds of the steel workers themselves as the struggle progressed. This organizing crew, made up

in the main of radical and progressive elements, such as Farmer-Laborites, Syndicalists, Left Socialists, and Communists, was animated by a militant, fighting spirit and determination to carry through the organizational campaign in the face of every obstacle.

Again, in this vital respect of solid labor backing, the C.I.O. campaign is incomparably much better situated. While it is true that the A. F. of L. officially is sabotaging the campaign, nevertheless the movement has the solid support of twelve powerful unions, comprising one-third of the A. F. of L., besides the enthusiastic endorsement of innumerable organizations throughout the trade union movement. This is a most decided advance over the dilly-dallying attitude taken towards the organization of the steel workers generally by the labor leaders in 1919.

Substantial Organizing Funds

One of the expressions of the indifference and hostility of the top A. F. of L. trade union leadership in 1919 towards the organization of the steel industry was the failure to supply the Organizing Committee with adequate funds and organizers. This, of course, greatly hampered the movement in all its stages and made its progress ten times more difficult. When the campaign was initiated, the A. F. of L. leaders unanimously rejected a proposal to provide the necessary organization fund of \$500,000 and instead cynically donated to the Organizing Committee the ridiculous sum of \$100 from each of the 24 “cooperating” unions. Such action amounted, in fact, to actually rejecting any serious attempt to organize the steel workers. The result of such a criminally stupid attitude was to complicate enormously and make more difficult the work of the Organizing Committee by forcing it to raise its organizing funds almost entirely from among the

steel workers. This cut down disastrously the scope and tempo of the movement from the outset.

The substantial and welcome donations that were given by the three needle trades unions (which amounted to almost twice as much as all the 24 "cooperating" unions combined contributed during the whole campaign and strike), came after the steel workers were organized and had declared a national strike.

In the vital financial respect, the C.I.O. is incomparably better situated than was the Organizing Committee of 1919. It has at its disposal a fund of \$500,000, with the certainty of securing much more, if needed. This insures the possibility of the organizing work being done on the proper scale from the outset. Had the 1919 Organizing Committee such a fund to go on, undoubtedly it would have succeeded fully in the campaign of establishing trade unionism in the steel industry.

A National Campaign

In 1919 not only did the A. F. of L. leaders refuse to give the steel campaign adequate financial support and real organized backing in other respects, but they also systematically attempted to restrict the organization work to a picayune local basis. The original plan for the campaign provided for a great national drive simultaneously in all the steel centers, backed by the full support of the 24 craft unions in the industry, and of the A. F. of L. Had this method been adopted, the movement would have been a complete success and the Steel Trust compelled to recognize the unions. But the cynical A. F. of L. leaders, Gompers himself particularly, pooh-poohed the plan as fantastic and stated that the movement had to grow gradually from small beginnings in one locality or even in one steel mill.

With their niggardly financial policy, their failure to supply sufficient organizers, and their generally reactionary approach to the work, they did manage to restrict it at the outset to only the Chicago district. This was a fatal handicap, because as soon as the movement took hold seriously in that district, the steel magnates, sensing the danger of a successful national drive, proceeded to maneuver against such a contingency by giving the steel workers all over the country four wage increases, the basic eight-hour day, and by setting up an economic and political terrorism against the movement in all the other districts. All this made it enormously more difficult for the spreading out of the movement on a national scale.

Now, however, as the C.I.O. contemplates the work of organizing steel, the necessity for a campaign on a national scale simultaneously in the principal steel centers (the original plan of 1919) is crystal clear. After the experiences of 1919, to proceed upon any other basis would be criminal stupidity and no one would dare to suggest it. The ample resources at the disposal of the C.I.O. enable it to launch a national campaign from the outset.

The Reactionary A.A. Leaders

One of the most serious handicaps of the 1919 campaign was the fact that the reactionary Tighe-Leonard leadership of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, in accordance with their traditional attitude in the steel industry as lackeys of the steel corporations, were definitely hostile to the whole movement and spared no efforts to disrupt it. A large part of the energy and time of the organizers was spent in overcoming the A.A. leaders' sabotaging efforts. Without doubt, the ultimate loss of the strike was largely attributable to the open betrayals of these reactionaries.

In this present campaign, the C.I.O. need not be seriously hampered by these unreliable elements. There is a strong progressive movement in the union which can easily be cultivated to oust completely the Tighe-Leonard leadership. Besides this, the C.I.O. in its recent agreement with the A.A. managed to tie the hands of these notorious reactionaries and enemies of the steel workers. The C.I.O. is also in a position to protect the movement against such misleaders by thoroughly democratizing the organization campaign; that is, by setting up a whole series of rank-and-file committees, etc., much as was done in 1919, and especially by cultivating the progressive and militant elements in the industry as the practical organizing force and union leaders. The importance of such democratization is emphasized by the fact that the democratically organized committee was the backbone of the 1919 campaign and it succeeded in organizing the masses of workers in spite of all the terrific handicaps faced by the movement at that time.

The Language Problem

In 1919 a big problem was that great masses of steel workers did not understand the English language. The mills were full of newly-arrived immigrants, speaking almost every language under the sun, and most of them quite unfamiliar with American conditions and traditions. This made it very difficult to carry the message of unionism to them, necessitating the use of many languages in meetings, union literature, etc.

But in 1936 this language problem is much less severe. With immigration almost completely closed down for many years, the great bulk of the foreign-born steel workers have learned the rudiments of the English language. Besides, there has grown up a whole generation of their children, speaking

English and well conversant with American life in general. The language problem is now, therefore, very minor in comparison with what it was in 1919.

The Lessons of 1919

Another great advantage the present campaign has over that of 1919 is that the organizers now are working in the realization that the job was done once before and that it can, therefore, be done again. On the other hand, in 1919 there was only pessimism in the ranks of the trade unions regarding the possibility of unionizing the steel industry, and this was a terrific handicap. The Steel Trust, with its great wealth, ruthless methods, political control, spy system, company unions, etc., and its many defeats of the trade unions, had built up a reputation of invincibility. But the campaign of 1919 shattered that invincibility legend completely, and proved that the steel workers could be organized, by lining up 365,000 of them in spite of all the Steel Trust's demagoguery, fake concessions and terrorism. And, equally important, the organizers of 1936 have, to guide them, the many practical and valuable lessons learned in the 1919 struggle.

The Communist Party

Last, but by no means least, the C.I.O. organizers of today have a great advantage over the organizers of 1919 in the fact that today there is in existence a strong Communist Party to lend its active assistance. In 1919 the Communist Party was just being born and was in no position to give material aid. But now matters are vastly different. The Communist Party is well established and has a large following in steel as well as other industries. Its members are militant workers and fighters and they will use the last ounce of their

energy, resources and courage to make the present organization drive a complete success.

From the foregoing, it is quite clear that the C.I.O., in approaching the work of organizing the steel workers, has an easier task than that which faced the organizers in 1919. As we have seen, in the important matters of a more favorable economic and political situation, the industrial form of organization, solid backing of substantial sections of the labor movement and ample funds, as well as the benefit of many other valuable lessons in the 1919 struggle, the C.I.O. has all the best of it. And inasmuch as the 1919 organizing committee, notwithstanding its greater difficulties, did succeed in organizing the workers, the workers have the right to expect that the C.I.O., with its greater resources and the better situation generally, will have even greater successes at the work in hand. There has been lots of talk about organizing the steel workers. The time for talk is now over. The C.I.O. has the way cleared, and the resources in hand, for carrying on of a successful campaign.

The steel workers generally should be made to realize fully the much better opportunities now existing for victory than in 1919. It must not be forgotten that the 1919 strike was lost and that many workers will nourish feelings of defeatism. And the steel bosses will do all in their power to convince the workers that the present campaign cannot succeed either. To break down such propaganda and to give the steel workers absolute confidence of victory is, therefore, one of the basic tasks of the organizers.

Article II

A. A Progressive Movement

IN THE foregoing article I have pointed out the greater difficulties confronting the steel organizers of 1919 than now exist. In spite of all these obstacles and the prevailing pessimism, however, we succeeded in organizing the bulk of the steel workers and in conducting a three-and-one-half-month strike of 365,000 workers in the heart of the steel industry. How, then, was this accomplished? The answer was to be found primarily in the application of a few sound principles in the composition, theories and methods of the organizing forces. The C.I.O., in the present campaign, is going up against a very stiff fight, and it will do well to learn whatever lessons the big 1919 struggle has to teach it. Let us, therefore, point out a few of the more salient and important of these lessons.

One of the elementary reasons for the success of the 1919 organizers in mobilizing the great masses of the steel workers for struggle against the steel trust was the progressive character of the movement. This progressivism explains (even as it does in the case of the C.I.O. now) why the 1919 organizers began in the first place, for never have the Right reactionaries of the A. F. of L. undertaken such a big and serious job of organization in the union.

In a general sense, the forces that organized the steel workers in 1919 were similar to the present C.I.O., that is,

they constituted a progressive opposition movement in the A. F. of L., and did their organization work in the face of a growing sabotage by the reactionary Right wing controlling the A. F. of L. In this connection there are two important differences, however, between the organizing forces then and now: First, the organizers of 1919 were far less strongly entrenched in the trade unions than are the present C.I.O. leaders; second, the 1919 organizers were considerably more to the Left than is the C.I.O.

The campaign of 1919 was carried through on the basis of a developing united front between the progressive and Left-wing forces in the A. F. of L. John Fitzpatrick, Chairman of the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers, was the head of the National Farmer-Labor Party. As for myself, the Secretary of the National Committee, I was a Syndicalist.

Gradually, the progressive and Left forces in the A. F. of L. generally tended to rally around the steel committee. It was no accident, therefore, that the three Socialist-led needle trades unions (Amalgamated Clothing Workers, International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, and Furriers) contributed between them almost twice as much cash as was given by all the 24 cooperating unions together. Had the steel strike been successful, one of its major consequences certainly would have been the overthrow of the Samuel Gompers regime in the A. F. of L. by the gathering progressive and Left forces.

Naturally, the 1919 National Committee leaders chose, as far as possible, progressives and Lefts to lead the organization work. For example, the General Organizer, J. G. Brown was a prominent F.-L.P. leader and later became national secretary of that party; Joe Manley, an iron worker and key man in the work, and S. T. Hammersmark, a lead-

ing Youngstown organizer, were Syndicalists and later became Communists. J. Olchon, E. Gunther, J. Gent, F. Smith, Joe Cannon, and various other organizers were Socialists. Besides, there were dozens of progressives of different shades and many other militant union types. Also the honest conservative organizers who became attached to the Committee soon took on a decidedly progressive character. Into such an organizing committee the old veteran fighter, Mother Jones, fitted easily and naturally. The customary chair-warming, hotel-sitting A. F. of L. type of organizers were few and they found anything but a congenial atmosphere among the working organizers.

It was such an organizing crew, made up of revolutionaries, progressives and union militants, that carried the 1919 battle to the steel trust. Dauntlessly these organizers faced the Steel Trust terror, overcame the heart-breaking lack of support and the actual sabotage by A. F. of L. leaders, solved the many complicated problems arising in the organizing work, and finally organized the steel workers in spite of all opposition. They realized the vast significance of the work they were in, and they knew that in the broad steel movement, extending from the men who dug the iron ore and transported it on to the workers in the mills and the Great Lakes, to those who delivered the finished steel products to the railroad workers on the main lines—they were blazing the way for industrial unionism in the A. F. of L. Without such a militant fighting crew of organizers, the organization of the steel workers in 1919 never could have been accomplished.

For the C.I.O. organizers the lesson of all this should be plain enough. They have had much practical experience in real battles against the employers all over the country and they know, therefore, that organizing the steel industry is

no pink tea party. The C.I.O. leaders would make no mistake in selecting as organizers the most aggressive, intelligent, influential and active among the steel workers and related industries, and put them into the work. And the best fighters will be found almost invariably to be of a Left-wing persuasion politically; that is, Farmer-Laborites, Socialists or Communists.

B. A Democratic Movement

ANOTHER basic cause of the success in organizing such great masses of steel workers in 1919 was the fact that the organizers aimed to secure the widest possible participation of the workers themselves in the actual building of the unions. The whole movement was based upon a broad trade union democracy. This democracy was developed, of course, not in accordance with plans of the A. F. of L. leaders, but despite them. It originated through the initiative of the organizers who had the work directly in hand.

In order to base the organization movement solidly upon rank-and-file participation, a whole series of organizations and activities were developed. Thus, local steel councils were set up in all the principal steel centers and they sometimes had as many as 200 delegates; they actively led the local work and locked all the various unions firmly together in the steel towns. There were also local committees in the steel centers made up of representatives of non-steel industry unions that were cooperating with the general drive. In addition, there were frequent meetings of the local steel organizers, scores of whom came directly from the ranks of the local workers themselves.

All these devices tended to draw the masses directly into the work and to call forth their latent leadership, energy and enthusiasm. The same democratic principle was also applied

on a national scale. Thus, for example, a large rank-and-file conference of steel workers from all parts of the industry was held in Pittsburgh, attended by several hundred delegates, to unify the organization work nationally, to lay the basis for demands upon the bosses, to consider questions of strategy, etc. This national conference vastly strengthened the whole campaign. Similarly, on the eve of the strike, a national strike vote was taken, a step which enormously enthused the workers and intensified their direct participation in the movement.

The committee that led the 1919 general movement, the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers, also had a considerable rank-and-file character. On paper it consisted of 24 presidents of the cooperating industrial unions in the campaign, but in reality these big officials sabotaged it and very few attended its meetings. Hence its gatherings consisted principally of the field organizers, who mapped out the practical work and in many instances came into sharp conflict on questions of policy with the reactionary top leaders of the A. F. of L. and the 24 cooperating unions.

The general effect of thus systematically democratizing the movement was to sink its roots deeply among the masses and to win their enthusiastic support. It enabled the movement largely to overcome the acute lack of resources and lack of solidarity caused by the criminal failure of the A. F. of L. and steel union leaders generally to support the campaign. Thus, consciously applied, trade union democracy was one of the "secrets" of the great vitality and fighting spirit of the 1919 movement.

In the present campaign to organize the steel industry, the C.I.O. organizers would do well to pay close attention to the lessons of trade union democracy that the 1919 strike has to teach. This is all the more necessary because one of

the weaknesses of the C.I.O. leadership is a lack of trade union democracy in their unions.

There is also present a tendency toward over-centralization in the leadership of the steel drive and it should be corrected. A whole series of rank-and-file committees, activities, etc., should be developed, which will actually draw in large masses of workers as practical organizers. Besides, these local committees and organizers should be linked up with the national directing committee. Such measures would increase the workers' confidence in the movement and would enable them to utilize their boundless energy and militancy for its upbuilding.

The need for trade union democracy in organizing the steel workers is one of the clear lessons of 1919 which must not be ignored.

Article III

C. A National Movement

ANOTHER fundamental reason why the organizers of 1919, in the face of stupendous difficulties, were able to mobilize such great masses of steel workers was because the entire campaign was based upon the strategy of a national industrial movement. Previously, the A. F. of L. had nibbled at the task of organizing the steel workers, usually on the basis of the workers in only one locality or even in one craft of one locality. We threw this antiquated system into the discard and proceeded on the basis of attacking the problem of organizing the steel workers simultaneously in all crafts and all localities. The degree to which we achieved this national movement was the measure of our success in general.

We recognized two main reasons why the steel campaign should be based upon such a unified national movement:

- (1) It was necessary in order to bring the full power of all the steel workers simultaneously against the steel trust;
- (2) It was also necessary psychologically for the steel workers in order to rouse their fighting spirit and self-confidence.

The first of the these two reasons for a simultaneous national drive in all steel centers is pretty obvious (at least for everyone but a Gompers or Green), it being perfectly clear that the steel workers cannot possibly defeat the Steel Trust in any one craft or locality, but must deliver their attack all along the line and develop the maximum power of which they are capable.

Our second reason for a national drive, the psychological one, is more subtle and requires an explanation to those not familiar with the steel worker and his environment. The unorganized steel workers, much more so than packing house workers, rubber workers, etc., work and live in an environment that tends to impress upon them a deep sense of their helplessness as individuals. To begin with, the steel workers work scattered far and wide in gigantic mills carrying on tremendous industrial processes in a terrific roar of noise and at great personal hazard, all of which impresses the individual with his littleness. On top of this very important psychological factor, the steel workers, in their life generally, run up against innumerable other forces which serve to impress upon them the great power of the men who control the gigantic industries in which they work. They see their shop life and standard of living dictated arbitrarily and ruthlessly by these economic masters and they also note how the steel communities, politics, churches, civic organizations of various kinds, etc., are entirely dominated by the almost mythical steel trust. (By a working of the same psychological principle, the steel workers, once they get organized and are able to make a stand against the powerful forces all about them, will develop an especially strong sense of their own power.)

Impressed on all sides thus with a sense of helplessness as individuals, the unorganized steel workers require, in order to awaken them to a sense of their economic power, a demonstration by the unions that they are able to cope successfully with these enormous forces which surround them. For the unorganized steel worker, a great national drive in all steel centers, backed by outside unions and utilizing every means of publicity and mass mobilization, fur-

nishes the basis for such a psychological awakening on his part.

It was in line with this double necessity for a national movement that the organizers in 1919 originally proposed a great drive simultaneously in all steel centers. The reactionary A. F. of L. leaders, however, with no real interest in the work, rejected this plan, holding to the theory that the work must be begun in only one locality, gave the organizers but a few hundred dollars and a half-dozen organizers to take up the work. This was a deadly blow. It almost killed the movement at the outset, and restricted the work to the Chicago district. The steel magnates, in order to prevent the movement catching hold in other districts, were enabled to move against us elsewhere (by wage concessions, shorter work-day, terrorism, demagoguery, etc.), where the workers were unorganized.

It was only after a year's desperate struggle that we managed to fight the movement through onto a national scale. During all this struggle, however, we kept the national idea always strongly before the workers. Our entire strategy was based upon this conception of a national movement and the steel workers were constantly inspired by it. It is significant that the most powerful argument of the organizers, the one most effective among the workers, was not about the benefits they would enjoy if they had trade unions, but about the progress that the movement was making in the various localities. The workers instinctively realized that their movement for organization had to be national in character and we went to the very greatest pains to develop this conception among them. Without this strategy of a national movement we could not possibly have mobilized the workers all over the industry as we did.

For the C.I.O. organizers, this lesson from the 1919 expe-

rience in organizing the steel workers should also be clear. The present campaign of organization must be definitely on a national scale. The drive should take place more or less simultaneously in all centers. There must be no dilly-dallying here and there, but a coordinated movement armed with every weapon of publicity, education and organization, and moving forward irresistibly and simultaneously in all important steel towns.

In my book *The Great Steel Strike and Its Lessons*, on page 21, I explain this type of campaign as we originally planned it, as follows:

"At the end of three or four weeks, when the organizing forces were in good shape and the workers in the mills acquainted with what was afoot, the campaign would be opened with a rush. Great mass meetings, built up by extensive advertising, would be held everywhere at the same time throughout the steel industry. This we calculated to arouse enthusiasm among the workers and to bring thousands of them into the unions, regardless of any steps the mill owners might take to prevent it. After two or three meetings in each place, the heavy stream of men pouring into the unions would be turned into a decisive flood by the election of committees to formulate the grievances of the men and to present these to the employers."

This type of campaign is still valid. It is essentially the correct approach to the organization of steel workers although not to be applied in a blueprint fashion. The C.I.O. has the resources to put it into effect and, if it learns from the experiences of 1919, it will do so.

D. A Disciplined Movement

IN ORGANIZING 500,000 unorganized steel workers for a united national fight against the Steel Trust, the question of

union discipline is of vital importance. We found this out in 1919, and our experience in this matter should be instructive to the C.I.O. organizers, notwithstanding their broad experience in trade union struggles.

As I have already stated, the strategy of the 1919 organizers was to extend the movement from the Chicago district, to which it was limited at the start by the A. F. of L. stupidity and treachery, onto a broad national scale. The Steel Trust, with an opposite strategy, tried to disintegrate and prevent the development of the national movement by having it waste its strength in a series of hopeless local strikes.

The 1919 organizers resolutely fought against the development of such local strikes. This was a supreme test of their discipline and that of the rank and file, because not only were such dangerous strikes fomented by the steel companies through wholesale discharges of workers, provocations by undercover men, and various forms of terrorism; but, what was even more difficult, many workers, impatient to hit back at their oppressors, were inclined to walk into their trap by demanding local strikes. It was one of the greatest achievements, however, of the 1919 organizers that these disruptive local strike tendencies were overcome without serious losses, and the movement gradually developed onto the national scale which finally enabled it to mobilize 365,000 workers in the great strike of September 22, 1919.

The bitter struggle in the highly strategic steel center of Johnstown illustrates the great importance of discipline in organizing the steel workers. There the Cambria Steel Company tried with all the means at its command to force a local strike, discharging over 3,000 workers in its efforts. Three times the local workers, harassed beyond endurance by these attacks, voted for a local general strike, but each time we were able to convince them of the folly of such a struggle.

Johnstown, one of the earliest points to organize, was far in advance of the rest of the industry in the Pittsburgh area. Had the 22,000 workers there struck, it would have been impossible to rally the rest of the steel workers to strike in support of them. They could not have won alone, and the whole campaign would have suffered a major if not a decisive defeat.

With the slogan "Johnstown must be held at all costs", we called upon the workers to stand fast and maintain their lines in spite of every provocation. This they did heroically, although the unions were almost cut to pieces under the attacks of the company in the ensuing period of several months that elapsed before the rest of the industry caught up with Johnstown in point of organization. This was a great victory for trade union discipline, and when the great strike took place, the Johnstown workers struck so completely that, as they said, "there was no one left in the plant to blow the whistle".

The 1919 organizers built up this strong trade union discipline in a fundamental way. It was achieved not by merely giving orders from the top and expecting the rank and file mechanically to obey them. On the contrary, it was essentially a voluntary and cultivated discipline. It was created by wide educational work among the rank and file through bulletins, speeches, etc.; which explained to the workers the full significance of the strategy of the campaign. It was intensified by the trade union democratic practices (described in the previous article) of the movement, which brought the workers into enthusiastic participation. It was further strengthened by the bold action of the organizers in always taking the lead on the fighting line in the struggle, all of which tended to educate the masses and to convince them of the sincerity, wisdom and determination of the campaign.

Thus, a strong trade union discipline was readily built up among them, which not only carried them through the long struggle of the organization campaign but also stood them in good stead during their heroic struggle in the great strike.

In the present struggle of the C.I.O. to organize the steel industry there will hardly be less need for strong discipline than there was in the 1919 campaign. The Steel Trust will use every possible means to disrupt the movement and to prevent it marching forward as a united national force. The danger of the present movement being weakened, if not destroyed, through local strikes and other local tendencies, will be real and must be struggled against. A strong trade union discipline is necessary and I have tried to point out some of the elementary methods we used for the building of such a discipline. It is all the more necessary to stress these methods of mass education and trade union democracy, because in general they receive but little attention in the U.M.W.A., the key organization in the C.I.O. drive.

In order to develop the necessary discipline to preserve a united national front against the steel industry, the C.I.O. will do well to make its organizing campaign not only a broad but also a swift one. There is no need to spin out the work of organizing the steel workers over a long period. In 1919 our original plan called for organizing the bulk of the workers in six weeks' time. The C.I.O., if it proceeds vigorously upon a national scale, can astound the country by the rapidity with which this great mass of workers will be brought into the unions. Speed in the organization campaign will solve many problems, but a thousand dangers lurk in hesitancy, delay, or dabbling with the work.

Article IV

E. A Fighting Movement

A GREAT source of strength in the 1919 campaign to organize the steel workers was the fact that the organizers never lost sight of the elementary consideration that the steel workers had to depend primarily upon their own economic power, their ability to strike the industry, in order to defeat the Steel Trust. They did not rely on the government to advance their cause or allow their movement to become a tail to the political kite of capitalist politicians. Hence, their movement remained healthy and was not misled into the many political traps that beset its path.

Of course, the 1919 organizers utilized so far as was practical every political institution and connection. They defended themselves in the courts, protested against the lawlessness of the Steel Trust and demanded that the workers' rights be protected by government officials. They sent a delegation to President Wilson urging upon him to call a conference with the Steel Trust. They worked with many churches, veterans' organizations, fraternal societies and every other body that showed any disposition of friendliness towards the steel workers.

But (and here is the nub of it) they never depended upon these movements and activities as substitutes for solid union action by the workers themselves. And it was well that they did not, because all such appeals and protests were quite fruitless to secure government action against the Steel

Trust. On the contrary, what the steel workers got nationally, state-wide and locally from the Wilson government, so-called friend of labor, in 1919 were injunctions, police, troops, armies of deputy sheriffs, suppression of free speech and assemblage, thousands of workers clubbed, shot and thrown into jail, tricky strike-breaking maneuvers, etc.

Consider, for example, the line followed in the great free speech fight in Western Pennsylvania. In this territory where there were some 200,000 steel workers employed, the Steel Trust, through subservient local politicians, completely suppressed the right of steel workers to assemble in union meetings. There was the anomalous situation created where the Socialist Party, I.W.W. and other Left-wing organizations were allowed to meet freely, while the A. F. of L. steel unions were rigidly denied the right to hire halls, meet on the street, or even on their own property. The organizers, of course, protested far and wide against this gross violation of the workers' constitutional rights. They fought it out in the courts, sent delegations to the local mayors and to the governor of Pennsylvania, had a dozen investigators in from the United States Department of Labor (whose report was never published).

All this political activity was correct, but it had only an agitational value. The main reliance was correctly placed upon mass action by the workers themselves. As the organizers went ahead with political protests, they at the same time attacked the free assemblage problem directly by going out to speak on the streets of Monessen, Homestead, McKeesport, Duquesne, Braddock and many other steel towns in face of the prohibition of all meetings by the local officials. The organizers were repeatedly thrown into jail in this free speech fight. But the steel workers were inspired by their bold example and rallied to the movement in such

thousands that everywhere the local city officials decided it was better to lift their free assembly embargo and allow the steel workers to hold meetings in halls. Thus, the steel workers established free speech and free assembly in the Pennsylvania steel districts in the pre-strike period by their own direct actions when all political protests had completely failed.

This policy of the workers depending only upon themselves received, however, its greatest test just on the eve of the big strike. The strike date had been set for September 22. President Wilson had called a national industrial conference for October 9, which was supposed to establish "harmony between capital and labor". Suddenly, therefore, President Wilson called upon us to "postpone" the steel strike until after his national industrial conference. President Gompers of the A. F. of L. immediately supported Wilson's proposal through a statement in the press, and soon afterward we received telegrams showing that a majority of the presidents of the 24 cooperating unions also supported Wilson.

But the organizers on the job were convinced that to attempt to postpone the strike as proposed would be absolutely fatal to the movement. Tens of thousands of workers were walking the streets discharged. Agents of the steel companies among the workers were circulating the story that the whole movement was about to collapse. And in any event there was absolutely no assurance whatever that the October 9 conference would do anything to help the steel workers. To postpone the strike, therefore, would have liquidated the movement altogether. It would have resulted in a violent offensive by the Steel Trust to cut the movement to pieces and a series of futile defensive local strikes by the demoralized workers.

Realizing these facts, the organizers went ahead with the strike on the date scheduled. It so turned out that the October 9 conference was a complete fiasco and, had the steel strike been postponed waiting for it, it would have resulted in the most shameful collapse that labor in this country had ever experienced. As it was, by striking the steel workers had a fighting chance to win. And they would have won their great strike had they received even a minimum of support from the labor movement generally.

During the present campaign it will be well to pay close attention to the lesson of the 1919 steel workers in not depending upon the capitalist politicians to save the workers' cause. It is practically certain that the present organization, campaign in the steel industry will not be allowed by the Steel Trust to be carried through to a victorious end without a big and bitterly fought strike. The workers must realize this from the outset. In face of the statement by the Steel Institute and the traditional position of the steel bosses any other conclusion would be folly.

Of course, it is necessary in the present struggle to utilize every government institution possible to protect the steel workers. It will be of enormous advantage if friendly government officials in Pennsylvania maintain the right of assemblage for the steel workers, furnish relief to those of them who are discharged for membership in the union, prevent the murderous use of state troopers and other police forces against the workers, and generally create a favorable public opinion toward the steel movement. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to depend upon capitalist politicians to make a real fight for the organization of the steel workers.

In the huge struggle now developing, we may be sure that the Steel Trust and finance capital generally will exert the heaviest pressure upon every government agency to prevent

the organization of the steel workers. It is already certain that they will be able to use the courts to knock out the Wagner Labor Act, to cripple the National Labor Relations Board, and to issue injunctions against the workers.

Nor can the steel workers put their trust in Roosevelt. Roosevelt is now on the retreat before the attacks of the big capitalists. And he cannot be expected to withstand the heavy capitalist pressure that will be placed upon him and to make the necessary last-ditch fight for the organization of the steel workers. On the contrary, Roosevelt is practically certain in the very probable strike crisis to adopt half-way measures or to make some sort of maneuver that would rob the steel workers of their victory either partly or completely.

That this lack of confidence in Roosevelt is justified was demonstrated by the experience of the steel workers with him in 1934. At that time, with the "Committee of Ten" movement, the workers in the steel industry had got under way a vast strike movement. The whole country was in the midst of a great wave of strikes and had the steel workers struck at this time they would surely have been speedily victorious. It was the best opportunity for victory ever presented to the steel workers in the history of the industry. But the victory was snatched from their hands by a maneuver of the steel barons to which William Green was an accessory, with the approval of Roosevelt. He induced the leaders of the union to turn the whole situation over to a government committee, with the result that the workers' cause was lost and their entire movement completely dissipated. Because the C.I.O. leaders are so closely bound up with Roosevelt politically it is all the more necessary to sound this warning against relying upon him.

From all this experience, in 1919 and later years, it is clear that the steel workers and their labor allies must pre-

pare for a real fight. They, of course, should utilize so far as they can friendly government officials, but under no circumstances should they put their cause in the hands of such people. On the contrary, every preparation must be made for a probable great strike of steel and related industries. Especially is it necessary to draw the railroad men into the movement, so that when such a strike is forced by the Steel Trust the mills (and perhaps many machine plants, foundries and other related industries) will be tied up completely. Failure of the railroad men to support the 1919 struggle was the final cause of the defeat of the movement. The 1936 campaign must be kept upon a fighting basis and not allowed to slip into the control of designing capitalist politicians. The whole history of the labor movement fairly shouts this elementary lesson.

F. A Political Movement

ALTHOUGH the steel workers must not surrender their movement into the hands of capitalist politicians, this does not mean in any sense that organized political action is not necessary for them. On the contrary, they have the most urgent need, in combination with other workers, to give their movement the highest political character and to utilize it to entrench workers' representatives in all branches of the government. Only when this is done will it be possible to use government forces—courts, police, soldiers, etc.—on the side of the workers. And to accomplish these ends in the only really effective way requires the establishment of the Farmer-Labor Party.

The 1919 strike also has some very valuable lessons to teach regarding such organized political action by the workers. At that time, as well as now, almost universally the steel town governments were in the hands of Steel Trust

lackeys. These people played a vital role in suppressing free assemblage, using the police power against the workers, and in general supporting the Steel Trust terror. They were a real menace and enemy of the steel workers at every step along the road.

A highly instructive exception was in the Wheeling, West Virginia, area, where the Labor Party movement was strong. There the workers before the strike had conducted important independent political action and had captured many key county and city offices. Thus, when the strike came, the workers were in a strategic position. They were able to maintain free assemblage and the right to picket in spite of all the menaces of the steel bosses and of their subservient courts and their armed thugs. And when, for example, it came to appointing deputy sheriffs to maintain public order, the workers' representatives picked them from the ranks of the strikers themselves. The general result was protection for the workers and a stronger strike generally.

The 1919 strike awoke the steel workers politically in many places. In Johnstown, Pa., for example, the workers captured both the Republican and Democratic Party machinery and nominated their own candidates for mayor, etc. However, due to their political inexperience and also to the work of provocateurs and disrupters, they were defeated by the bosses who put up an independent ticket. Had not 1919 been an off-election year there doubtless would have been many similar local movements in other steel towns making toward the creation of a Labor Party. The need for organized political action by the workers was so evident that I myself, who entered the steel campaign a Syndicalist and an opponent of political action, became a member of the Labor Party immediately after the end of the strike.

The C.I.O. should not ignore these vital political lessons of

1919. During the present struggle of the steel workers it will very probably be impossible to develop a national Farmer-Labor Party, or even state Farmer-Labor Parties in steel industry states soon enough to play an important role in the struggle. Nevertheless, very much can be done on a local scale by setting up Farmer-Labor Party and labor tickets in the various steel towns and nearby mining centers during the 1936 elections. Such local parties and movements would be a great source of strength to the present organization campaign and the strike that will almost surely follow it. They would also give a great impulse to the development of a Farmer-Labor Party on a statewide and national basis.

Not dependence upon capitalist friends of labor, but the organization of a Farmer-Labor Party; this must be the political line of the steel workers. The steel campaign should not only result in organizing huge masses of workers in the various basic industries, but should also be a real starting point for a great mass national Farmer-Labor Party.

The discontented masses of workers and small farmers are breaking away from the Republican and Democratic Parties. In order that they may not fall under the control of such unreliable men as Townsend and Lemke and the dangerous fascist demagogues Father Coughlin and Gerald Smith it is necessary to organize them into a national Farmer-Labor Party. The reactionary Green Executive Council of the A. F. of L., tied up with capitalist politicians, refuses to organize such a party. Hence, the duty falls upon the C.I.O. to take the lead in this fundamental matter. The failure of the trade union movement to launch a Farmer-Labor Party plays directly into the hands of the developing fascist movement in this country.

Article V

G. A Dauntless Movement

TO CARRY through the 1919 steel organizing campaign in the face of the great shortage of organizers and money, lack of solidarity among the unions, the unfavorable economic and political situation, etc., required imperatively that a high morale be developed among the organizing crew. In such hard conditions, the crew had to have boundless confidence in the organizability of the steel workers and also complete faith in its own ability to unite these masses into the unions. The crew also had to possess great flexibility in its organizing methods, in order to overcome the many difficult problems along the road. Then, as now, the steel industry could not be organized by the faint-hearted nor by men armed only with a blueprint plan.

The 1919 organizing crew managed to develop in high degree this necessary indomitable spirit, burning enthusiasm, and adaptability of methods, and it was these qualities which, in the final analysis, enabled the organization of the great masses of steel workers, notwithstanding the severe obstacles which the campaign faced. At the base of this high morale among the organizers (which they communicated to the masses) was, first of all, a good understanding and appreciation of the tremendous significance not only to the steel workers but to organized labor as a whole of the organization of the steel industry. Their morale was further strengthened

by the special organization theory which we advocated. This theory proceeded upon a simple, but very dynamic, three-phased analysis, as follows:

1. The steel workers (even the best paid) want to improve their living and working conditions, and need but be shown the way to accomplish this in order for them to move in that direction.

2. The task of the steel organizers, therefore, is, first, to make clear to the workers that the only way they can accomplish their desired betterment is through trade unionism, and, second, to provide the organizational means whereby the awakened masses can be enrolled in the unions. If this task of explanation and elementary organization is properly carried out by the organizers, then the steel workers will surely respond and pour into the unions in decisive masses, nor can all the fake concessions, demagoguery, and terrorism of the steel bosses prevent their doing so.

3. If the steel workers do not respond to the work of the organizers, consequently the fault lies not with the masses, but in the wrong methods of agitation and organization used by the organizers. The need in such a situation, therefore, is for the organizers, self-critically, to review their methods, to eradicate the errors in them and to adopt such new and correct methods as will start the willing masses into motion toward the union.

The essence of this theory was that it gave the organizers a limitless faith in the organizability of the steel workers and confidence in themselves to do the job. It provided them an invaluable self-critical approach to all their work. The general effect was to liquidate in the organizing crew the self-created pessimism which existed generally, not only among steel workers, but also in labor circles as to the organizability of the steel industry. Hundreds and hundreds of times

in our meetings of organizers did we go over and over this simple three-point theory of organization until finally the organizers were literally saturated with it. It infused them with a spirit of invincibility and it was the main factor that enabled them to organize the steel workers. It was only in later years, in my reading of Lenin, that I realized the full political significance of such self-criticism, which we spontaneously developed in response to our fundamental necessity in the steel campaign.

Here is how our organization theory worked in practice. In every steel town that the organizers entered, in addition to all other difficulties that they encountered, they had to face a monumental pessimism on the part of such trade unionists as they found there (building trades, printers, etc.). Universally these local trade unionists would greet the organizers with talk like this: "You can never organize the steel workers in this town. The mills are full of scabs, gathered from all ends of the country. As for the honest workers, they are either afraid of the terrorism, deluded by the company unions, or poisoned by the concessions given by the companies. We have tried to organize them for years, and can do absolutely nothing. You are up against a stone wall," and more in the same pessimistic strain.

But the organizers would brush these croakers aside, telling them that the trouble lay not in the workers, but in their own antiquated methods of organization. Then our organizers would attack the problem on the basis of our new methods of a broad industrial front, a great national movement, flexible organizational approach, etc. If one line of tactics failed in a given situation, our three-point organization theory always led to the adoption of new methods, until finally the correct approach was found. Although our theory was by no means applied 100 per cent in all instances, never-

theless, generally, the organizers used it, and to excellent effect.

The consequence of this self-critical approach to the organizational problem was that the word failure was not in the vocabulary of the 1919 steel organizers. Varying methods of organization were applied in the various districts where different obstacles presented themselves. Thus in the Chicago district the workers were organized by a series of great mass meetings. In McKeesport, where extreme terrorism prevailed, the great mass of workers were, on the other hand, unionized without open meetings but by semi-underground methods. In Johnstown, the workers were brought into the unions practically 100 per cent in a complicated struggle against the company union. In Bethlehem, the workers captured the company union and transformed it directly into trade unions. In Homestead and several other places the workers were organized in the midst of big open fights on the streets for the right of assembly. Everywhere, with the flexibility and resolution bred of self-criticism, the organizers adapted their methods of work to the peculiarities of each situation.

Take the great Youngstown district of some 50,000 steel workers, as an illustration of the 1919 flexible and determined methods of organization. When the organizers went into this great center they found an extremely difficult situation existing among the workers in addition to the usual obstacles of suppressed civic rights, discharge of workers, company unions, etc. Two years before there had been a fierce strike in which the town of East Youngstown had been burned down, the strike lost, and the union broken up. To complete the chaos, the steel union secretary at the time was charge with having accepting a bribe to smash the strike

and had fled the city. The A. F. of L. was completely discredited.

Here was a tough spot indeed, but the organizers, armed with our powerful three-point theory—the theory that the workers were organizable under any circumstances if proper methods were used—tackled the difficult Youngstown situation. They began in the usual way by holding a widely advertised mass meeting in the one hall open to the workers in Youngstown. But only a handful of steel workers came to the meeting, and the same thing occurred for three or four weeks at succeeding “mass” meetings. Clearly the workers were disgusted with the A. F. of L. and would have nothing to do with it. On all sides the organizers encountered derogatory remarks and even open hostility.

What to do in this crisis? Youngstown we had to win or the whole national campaign would be a failure. Ordinarily, A. F. of L. organizers, using their antiquated blueprint methods, would have folded up their tents and departed in the face of these difficulties, putting the blame for their failure upon the prevailing terrorism and the workers’ hostility and general passivity. But our working three-point theory saved the 1919 organizers from any such retreat. According to this theory, even the Youngstown workers, hostile though they were to the A. F. of L., nevertheless wanted to improve their conditions, and if the organizers could not win them for the Union, evidently the fault was that of the organizers, not the workers. Hence, the lack of success indicated that the organization methods were wrong and had to be changed.

So the whole approach to the organization work in Youngstown was revamped. The so-called mass meetings were abandoned altogether, and there was adopted a policy of single-jack work. The organizers frequented saloons,

workers’ homes, fraternal societies, clubs, hung about street corners, etc., wherever the workers were to be found, and not announcing themselves in the meantime as A. F. of L. organizers. Carefully and systematically, the campaign was explained to the workers in this manner. They even organized boxing matches, smokers and other social events under various auspices to reach the workers with their message.

After a few weeks of this kind of work, the organizers gradually broke down the workers’ suspicions and hostility, and soon the men began to trickle into the unions. The campaign gaining more and more the confidence of the workers, it was not long until this trickle became a stream and, deeming the situation ripe for a new change in tactics, the organizers opened up huge mass meetings and the stream of workers into the unions became a great flood. The vast armies of steel workers in the Youngstown district were soon ours. And our organizers, fed by such victories as that of Youngstown, became all the more invincible in their attack upon the remaining Steel Trust strongholds.

In my book on the steel strike, I say, page 41 :

“The National Committee can boast the proud record of never having set up its organization machinery in a steel town without ultimately putting substantial unions among the employees. It made little difference what the obstacles were; the chronic lack of funds; suppression of free speech and free assembly; raises in wages, multiplicity of races; mass picketing [of workers’ meetings] by bosses, wholesale discharge of union men, company unions, discouraging traditions of lost strikes; or what not—in every case, whether the employers were indifferent or bitterly hostile, the result was the same, a healthy and rapid growth of the unions. The National Committee proved beyond peradventure of a doubt that the steel industry could be organized in spite of all the Steel Trust could do to prevent it.”

In calling to the attention of the C.I.O. organizers and other militants in the steel campaign the lessons of self-criticism of the 1919 movement, there is no need for me to belabor the point. The implications are clear enough. Ahead of the present organizers stands a very bitter struggle. True, these organizers have more resources and backing than we had and should find the job of organization much easier, but the need for a high morale among them, a self-confidence bred of self-criticism, is perhaps just as acute as it was in 1919. The importance of this lesson of 1919 should be clear to all.

In Conclusion

THE CAMPAIGN in 1919 showed that the steel industry can be organized. This fact places a great weapon of confidence in the hands of the present-day organizers and masses. What has been done once can be done again and better with the greater forces and riper experience now available. Especially will this be the case if serious attention is paid to the lessons of the 1919 movement, most of which are very pertinent to the present situation. Breaking all traditions of top union officials, the C.I.O. leadership has shown that it is capable of learning from the 1919 experiences. They understand that the movement must be conducted upon an industrial union basis, that it must be carried out more or less simultaneously all over the country, that it is the historic task of the progressives and Left-wing forces to do the work of organization. They will also find it valuable to pay heed to the other lessons of the 1919 movement that I have touched upon in these articles.

I was never one of those who considered the organization of workers such a huge task. The decisive thing is to go about the work with the necessary resources, determination

and flexibility of tactics. The American Federation of Labor could have organized the steel industry many years ago if it had just wanted to do so, and the same is true of every other industry. In my book *The Great Steel Strike and Its Lessons*, pages 38 and 39, I explain my conception of trade union organization under specific American conditions, as follows:

"The organization of working men into trade unions is a comparatively simple matter when it is properly handled. It depends almost entirely upon the honesty, intelligence, power and persistence of the organization forces. . . .

"In view of its great wealth and latent power, it may be truthfully said that there isn't an industry in the country which the trade union movement cannot organize any time it sees fit. The problem in any case is merely to develop the proper organization crews and systems, and the freedom-hungry workers, skilled and unskilled, men or women, black or white, will react almost as naturally and inevitably as water runs down hill."

The experiences of 1919 and the line-up in the present campaign would go to show that the C.I.O. organizers, notwithstanding the A. F. of L. Executive Council sabotage, should be able readily to organize the mass of steel workers. The C.I.O. seems to have the necessary funds, skill and determination. The real problem will come, as it did in 1919, in the great strike which practically certainly must take place before the steel barons will sit down around the table and do business with the trade unions. We may be sure that these autocrats will never give up the open shop until they are compelled to do so by the militant mass pressure of the workers. While, of course, the workers would desire a favorable settlement without the necessity of a strike, they will have little choice in the matter, but will have to fight. The C.I.O. should, therefore, lay the basis for the greatest

mobilization of labor's forces—steel workers, coal miners, automobile workers, rubber workers, and especially railroad workers, in preparation for a hard-fought strike against the biggest capitalists in America.

Every effort also should be put forth to prevent the threatening split in the A. F. of L. and to develop a united front of the whole working class and its sympathizers, among the general public. When the strike comes, it should be made the greatest and most successful strike in the history of the country.

Victory can be won in the steel industry, and victory in the steel industry means to shatter the central anti-union fortress of the open shop. In 1919 we planned that with success in the steel industry we would launch a great organizing campaign throughout all the principal unorganized industries. Essentially this same perspective opens up before the C.I.O. If it wins in the steel campaign, and win it can if it proceeds systematically to mobilize the forces of labor upon a fighting basis, the final outcome should result not only in the organization of the 500,000 steel workers, but also millions of workers in many other industries. The steel campaign can be developed into the greatest victory ever won by American labor, and thereby throw the doors open for a whole new era of progress industrially and politically for the toiling masses.

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